



Testimony before the Housing Committee

Tuesday February 28, 2023

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Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, Senator Sampson, Representative Scott, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on several bills before you today.

At [Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity \(FCCHO\)](#), along with our many partners, we believe all Connecticut residents have a right to safe, affordable, and permanent housing in their community of choice. This includes our elders, our young families, workers- people that want to stay in their communities near to family or move to Connecticut for a job opportunity. When our state's residents have stable housing, our collective economic prosperity and well-being improves. **Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity**, is a coordinated, regional response to address the shortage of housing in Fairfield County, CT, and make housing affordable to people of all incomes and at all stages of life. We work together with the Litchfield County and Eastern Connecticut Centers for Opportunity.

I respectfully request that the committee:

Support H.B. 6780 and H.B. 6633

- [H.B. 6780](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING TENANT'S RIGHTS
 - From personal experience as a small-scale landlord, I know that transparency, trust and fairness are the best ingredients to a good housing relationship. Tenants should have the right to conduct a walk-through inspection of a rental home before moving in, and a limit to fees a landlord may charge in connection with tenant screenings.
- [H.B. 6633](#) – AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING
 - The need for increasing housing supply all over the state is well understood- in all communities- urban, suburban, and rural-there are families that are housing cost burdened and elders and young people that cannot afford to stay and reinvest in the community.
 - Every new affordable home is an opportunity for a family to thrive. Thriving families earn more, educate their children more, and contribute more to our communities.

- We need to embrace creative and visionary ways to increase development, in a sustainable and equitable way, and at many scales. This includes conversions of single family to duplexes, ADUs, missing middle to larger multi families near transit or commercial strip mall and office building conversion to housing to conservation development. There is an unparalleled opportunity to invest in smart, climate friendly, beautiful, walkable, and affordable places to live across the state.
- Outdated and exclusionary zoning and land use restrictions are barriers to creative imagining, planning and growth of just and thriving communities.
- Good planning for housing needs to be done at a regional level, as housing markets, development ecosystems, transit systems and employment pools are regional.
- Every Connecticut community has an obligation to contribute to meeting the housing needs of our state, including permitting its fair share of housing for low- and moderate-income households.

Support H.B. 6781 and S.B. 4 with the following amendments

- **H.B. 6781** – AN ACT ADDRESSING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY FOR RESIDENTS IN THE STATE
 - Amend to include an [additional \\$72 million in both FY24 & 25 to the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line](#) to expand the general [Rental Assistance Program \(RAP\)](#) . **RAP vouchers can keep families in their existing homes and prevent the costly economic and health consequences of housing insecurity and homelessness.**
 - Amend to include an additional \$5 million to the DOH Housing/Homeless Services line for housing navigation services to assist voucher recipients with finding homes.
 - Amend to include an addition of \$5 million to support additional housing inspection and enforcement capacity in municipalities that have a proactive residential rental licensing or inspection program – Hartford and New Haven are two examples.
 - Amend to remove modifications to Section 8-30g that would award one-half HUE point toward a moratorium for each unit of middle housing developed as of right within ¼ mile of transit district. Only housing with subsidy or deed restrictions that maintain affordability should be counted toward a moratorium or exemption from Section 8-30g.
- **S.B. 4** – AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT’S PRESENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS
 - Amend to explicitly include lower wage workers in the definition of workforce. Someone working full time at minimum wage makes \$31,200 annually and can afford a rent of no more than \$780/month. Full-time workers need to earn \$27.80 — nearly twice Connecticut's minimum wage— to afford a fairly priced two-bedroom apartment of about \$1,500 a month.

Oppose H.B. 5326

- **H.B. 5326** – AN ACT CONCERNING THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPEALS PROCESS AND REMOVING THE MUNICIPAL OPT-OUT DEADLINE FOR ACCESSORY APARTMENTS

- This bill would weaken Section 8-30g without creating additional affordable homes and is an attempt to count existing market-rate homes as affordable without benefiting cost-burdened residents. It is reflective of a race to the bottom attitude to prevent housing affordability rather than a race to the top to showcase a community's success in promoting equitable growth and homes for all.
- Section 8-30g has helped to create more than 7,500 affordable housing units across the state and moved towns to develop thousands more for residents who otherwise would not have had the opportunities those homes have provided.
- Furthermore, our affordable housing problem is a supply problem. When there are not enough homes at all income levels, families that earn the least are squeezed out of the market. Connecticut needs all the market rate units that are produced by 830-g in addition to the affordable housing units.
- While we support robust and catalytic public investment in affordable housing, the market supplies the most housing. 830-g is a tool that the market can use to effectively produce affordable housing as well as market rate housing.
- Towns can take advantage of 830-g by proactive collaboration and inviting development that is thoughtfully planned and addresses local housing needs.
- Accessory Dwelling Units are a smart and historically (pre-zoning) common way to enable more homes within the existing fabric of a community. From personal experience, an ADU in my family's house, enabled my grandmother to age in place with dignity and companionship until she passed at age 99. See RPA's [Be My Neighbor in Fairfield County](#) report to see how thousands of new homes could be produced in Fairfield County with ADUs,

The **Fairfield County Center for Housing Opportunity** facilitates the production, preservation, and protection of a full spectrum of housing that fosters communities of opportunity accessible to all Fairfield County residents. We believe that equitable access to housing that is safe, affordable, and connected to resources is the foundation of a thriving community. Utilizing a collaborative, data-driven, regional approach FCCHO strives to reduce the percentage of cost burdened households in Fairfield County, while expanding and protecting existing housing affordability.

According to the Urban Institutes, [Housing Connecticut's Future](#), Connecticut is short at least 85,000 homes for households at the lowest income levels and short many more homes for families and workers at all income levels.

We are facing both an unprecedented imperative as well as an incredible opportunity to steer the course of Connecticut's future with planning for and investing in inclusive, thriving, and sustainable communities for all. I urge you to pass legislation that facilitates housing affordability and ensuring safe and healthy homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

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The Housing Collective

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